

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

Public Session: 5:30p.m.

AGENDA

A. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL TERRITORY

Neil Sheard

B. CALL TO ORDER/NOTING OF MEMBERS ABSENT

Neil Sheard

C. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

D. SELECTION OF CHAIR

E. NEW BUSINESS:

1. ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATION (AQ) COURSES 2025/2026

Sara De Divitiis

2. NEW KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM – SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION

Sara De Divitiis

3. IMPROVING ACCESS, CLARITY, AND CONNECTION: A REFRESH OF DSBN.ORG

Milica Petkovic

F. NEXT MEETING – TO BE CONFIRMED

G. ADJOURNMENT

Additional Qualification (AQ) courses 2025/2026

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

BACKGROUND

Across the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN), teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to professional learning through participation in Additional Qualification (AQ) courses. AQ courses are a provincially recognized form of professional learning, tracked and certified by the Ontario College of Teachers, and are one-way educators continue to build their teaching practice over their careers.

DSBN has intentionally invested time, resources, and expertise to become an approved AQ provider. This allows the board to design, write, and deliver its own AQ courses, at no cost to DSBN contract and long-term occasional teachers, while ensuring alignment with provincial requirements and DSBN priorities focused on improving student outcomes.

Although tuition-free, AQ courses require a significant personal commitment from educators. Participants balance full teaching responsibilities with evening and blended learning, reflection, and applied coursework outside of the instructional day. Courses are facilitated by DSBN educators and instructional leaders and are delivered after school hours at DSBN sites.

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATION COURSES – OVERVIEW

To date, hundreds of DSBN educators have participated in DSBN-run AQ courses, with continued enrolment anticipated as additional offerings are added during the next school year. Participants frequently share their learning with colleagues, extending the impact beyond individual classrooms and reinforcing a collaborative culture focused on continuous improvement.

DSBN led AQ courses support system priorities and student needs in areas such as:

- Indigenous Education
- Equity and Inclusive Education
- Special Education
- English Language Learners
- Literacy and Mathematics
- French
- Computer Studies
- Kindergarten

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These courses strengthen instructional practice, deepen understanding of diverse learner needs, and provide practical, classroom-ready strategies that teachers apply directly in their daily work with students.

CONCLUSION

DSBN's system-led AQ courses represent a strategic and meaningful investment in professional learning. The commitment shown by participating educators and facilitators strengthens instructional practice, builds system coherence, and supports continuous improvement across schools. This work contributes directly to improved student experiences and outcomes across the district.

CONNECTION TO DSBN STRATEGIC PLAN

Through ongoing professional learning and capacity building we provide high-quality learning opportunities to educators, which in turn, supports staff professional growth, and aims to improve student achievement, learning, and well-being.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sara De Divitiis, Superintendent of Student Achievement and Well-Being

New Kindergarten Curriculum – system implementation

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

BACKGROUND

In September 2026, the District School Board of Niagara will fully implement Ontario's new Kindergarten Curriculum. The updated curriculum strengthens the foundations of literacy, mathematics, and science, while preserving the play-based, inquiry-driven approach that reflects how young children learn best.

To ensure our newest learners experience a strong September start that sets the foundation for success throughout their school years, DSBN has developed a system-wide implementation plan that spans January to September 2026. The plan ensures every DSBN Kindergarten classroom will be ready to deliver the new curriculum with clarity, confidence, and care. This intentional, coordinated approach ensures that educators, administrators, students and families are well-positioned for the transition.

PREPARING OUR SCHOOLS FOR A STRONG START

DSBN's implementation plan is structured around four key areas:

- family engagement
- professional learning
- resource development
- leadership support

Family Engagement

Strong home–school partnerships are essential to a successful Kindergarten experience, and DSBN is engaging with families consistently in the lead-up to September. Kindergarten Open Houses took place across all DSBN elementary schools the week of May 4–7, 2026, giving families the chance to visit Kindergarten classrooms, meet educator teams, and see firsthand how learning unfolds in the early years. Ongoing communication continues through DSBN social media, website, and direct outreach from school teams, with materials prepared to explain the new curriculum and help incoming children and families feel welcome and prepared for a strong transition.

On June 1st, 2026, DSBN will host a free webinar titled “Introduction to Special Education Services for Kindergarten Families.” The webinar will provide an overview of the Kindergarten program, highlight resources and strategies for students who may require additional support, and explore Special Education resources available to families, including how families can collaborate with school and Board teams.

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Professional Learning

Kindergarten educator teams are engaging in ongoing learning through DSBN-developed sessions, collaborative learning opportunities, and Ministry of Education webinars, all intended to build a shared understanding of the curriculum, with particular attention to early literacy and mathematics practice.

Resource Development

System teams are updating and developing resources to support strong, intentional instructional practice, assessment, and documentation of student learning – tools to aligned with the new curriculum designed to build and sustain thoughtful, engaging learning environments that support all students.

Leadership Support

Administrators are receiving targeted supports to lead implementation at the school level, including guidance on classroom environments, team collaboration, and supporting educators.

CONCLUSION

DSBN's intentional, proactive approach to the rollout of the new Kindergarten curriculum reflects a strong commitment to early learning. By aligning professional learning, resources, leadership support, and family engagement ahead of September 2026, DSBN is supporting educators and administrators to confidently implement the curriculum and strengthen Kindergarten learning experiences.

This work reinforces strong foundations in literacy, mathematics, and science, promotes inclusive and responsive learning environments, and supports student growth and achievement, giving DSBN's youngest learners the strong start that shapes their success in the years ahead.

CONNECTION TO DSBN STRATEGIC PLAN

DSBN supports high-quality learning experiences and professional growth for staff to improve student learning, achievement, and well-being by strengthening instructional practice and building collective responsibility and shared leadership for continuous improvement in learning across the system.

Respectfully submitted by:

Sara De Divitiis, Superintendent of Student Achievement and Well-Being

Improving Access, Clarity and Connection: A Refresh of DSBN.org

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

BACKGROUND

It has been several years since the District School Board of Niagara (DSBN) undertook a comprehensive review of its public-facing website, including content, structure, and user experience. As DSBN has grown and its programs and services have expanded, the website has increased in both size and complexity. Recognizing that students and families increasingly rely on dsbn.org for high-value, time-sensitive information, the need for clear organization, intuitive navigation, and enhanced accessibility has become more critical.

In the 2025-2026 school year, the Board is undertaking a refresh of the dsbn.org website. This work is focused on removing barriers and improving access to information for students, staff, families and members of the broader community. A cross-departmental effort, the website refresh aligns with DSBN's ongoing commitment to accessibility, usability and inclusive design, supporting individuals with diverse abilities, languages and access needs.

WEBSITE REFRESH OVERVIEW

The intent of the website refresh is to create a welcoming and user-friendly digital environment that supports clear and consistent communication with students, staff, families and community members.

The refresh provides an opportunity to improve navigation and streamline content so important information can be found quickly and understood more easily, strengthening engagement with key audiences and stakeholders. Overall, the refresh is designed to support accurate, timely information without unnecessary complexity, regardless of a user's ability, device or familiarity with DSBN.

User-Centered Design

The refresh is grounded in how users navigate dsbn.org and what information they access most frequently, informed by data compiled by DSBN's Information Technology Services team. In response, the refreshed website will place greater emphasis on high-demand content, consolidate less frequently used information, and apply best practices in user-centered design.

Accessibility and WCAG Alignment

Accessibility is a key consideration throughout the refresh. The site is being designed to align with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) Level AA, which supports a broad range of accessibility needs and improves overall usability for all users.

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Enhancing Access and Engagement

Design choices – including a simple and consistent page layout and built-in translation tools to support families in accessing information in their preferred language – strengthen access, usability, and engagement.

Homepage Structure and Navigation

As part of the refresh, the homepage will be streamlined to six main headings combining familiar labels with more intuitive pathways which reflect a strong focus on students and families. Sub-menus within each section will be refined to help users understand where to begin when looking for key information.

Refresh Timeline

The website refresh is moving forward in phases, with a planned launch in August. This phased approach allows for feedback generation, content auditing and the development of site structure, design and accessibility work. Throughout the process, various DSBN departments and teams are working collaboratively to support the design and implementation of the refreshed website.

CONCLUSION

The dsbn.org website refresh is intended to improve how students, families, staff, and community members access information by addressing common barriers and strengthening usability and accessibility. With clearer content, improved navigation, and accessibility built in from the outset, users will be better able to find, understand, and act on information quickly and independently. These improvements support equitable access, meaningful engagement, and DSBN's commitment to clear, inclusive communication across the system.

CONNECTION TO DSBN STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Priority: We value caring and supportive environments that promote lifelong learning for all students, staff and community.

Strategic Actions: Foster environments that promote lifelong learning for all students, staff and community through a collective responsibility to nurture a culture of trust, respect and cooperation.

Respectfully submitted by:

Milica Petkovic, Public Relations Manager